



BUSINESS VIEW

MAY/JUNE 2017

Caribbean

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Corner View

Hey, hey, hey; here we go again. When I say Business...you say View! (((BUSINESS)))... Uhhh, heelllllooooo???...Let's try this again... (((BUSINESS)))... oh, ok!!! So it's like that? Alright, no problem, it's not like it's the first time I've been left hanging. But, I have no problem doing the honors all to my lonesome...(((BUSINESS VIEW)))! That's right, Business View!!! We'll work on that again next month!

I want to start by, again, thanking everyone for their participation in making us the largest business to business, executive publication in the Caribbean. We are growing at a much faster rate than we very ambitiously predicted. We are connecting manufacturers to distributors, distributors to retailers, and retailers to contractors, interior designers, architects, and the list of what we've actually been able to do here has expanded in ways that we never imagined. So, I want to thank all of those who have participated in that growth, as we promise to give back 100-fold, and then some. Speaking of "giving back," I want to discuss the concept of "karma" and how it plays out in the business world. So, for starters, are you one who believes in the concept of karma? Perhaps, that depends upon how it's defined, right? Well, the technical definition involves religion, and the belief in a next life, but with your same spirit. And, considering the fact that this is a business magazine, and not a spiritual enlightenment magazine, let's go around that definition to see if we can agree on a more general definition being: "What goes around, comes around."

Now, if we can agree that this principle exists, why is it important, and is it something that you consider while doing whatever business task that you may be performing? From the largest insurance companies in the world, to the mechanic that your cousin's girlfriend's brother told you about that will fix your car at your house the same exact day you call, all will



be impacted by the decisions they make. Your livelihood is your reputation, but only those that care about karma, will ever care about their reputations. How you treat the employees of the company will impact the future greatness (or lack thereof) of your company. The policies that you implement that are focused on helping to positively impact the community, will, without fail, assist the overall future greatness of your company. Every inch buys a meter, and every meter will buy you a mile of prosperous longevity. As for actions that are purposefully implemented to cause harm and/or conflict - they will affect you and your company in ways that will be difficult to quantify. But, rest assured, you will be affected. You will be handicapped. You will be punished. So take my word for this (it's fairly solid, unless you bring up the ongoing broken promise I made to visit the gym five days a week): regardless of your willingness to subscribe to the classical definition of karma or not, if you'll operate your business knowing and believing in this one concept, I'm certain that it will guide you properly through every business practice that you implement from this day forward. Take that to the bank, and tell them Andre sent you (they may give you a free calendar or something).

Until next time, plan, build, and continue to prosper

Andre
Andre Barefield

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Opening Lines

MAY/JUNE 2017

ANTIGUA SAILING WEEK: A GOLDEN YEAR

The grand awards ceremony for Antigua Sailing Week was held in Nelson's Dockyard and the UNESCO World Heritage Site was a fitting venue for the 50th edition of this historic occasion. Thousands of sailors attended the ceremony and whilst all of the respective class winners had been posted, there were special awards that were still to be announced, including the biggest prize in Caribbean sailing, the Lord Nelson Trophy.

Asot Michael, minister of tourism, economic development, investment and energy of Antigua and Barbuda, gave a heart-warming wel-

come speech to the crowd, which highlighted how important Antigua Sailing Week is to the twin island nation. Guest of honor, Sir Rodney Williams, governor general of Antigua and Barbuda presented the main prizes.

The stage was glittering with dozens of trophies, many of which have been sought after for decades of Caribbean racing. Winners took to the stage to receive their appreciation from the crowd, and finally there was just one trophy left. You could feel the tension as MC Tommy Paterson announced the winner of the Lord Nelson Trophy as Sergio





Sagramoso's Puerto Rican Melges 32, Lazy Dog.

Sergio Sagramoso and his team took to the stage to tumultuous applause and then crowded around the historic Lord Nelson Trophy after the prize giving, scanning the list of names etched upon it over the years. The last Puerto Rican boat to win the trophy was Tom Hill's Titan XII in 2005.

"It is really amazing," said Sagramoso, who had been racing in the highly competitive CSA 4. "I am so proud. The Lazy Dog team will always

remember this moment; this is why we do it. This was the toughest regatta I have ever been to with eight races and a very high level of competition."

Ross Applebey's Oyster 48, Scarlet Oyster had been in impressive form all week; however the British charter boat was once again just short of winning the Lord Nelson Trophy. Ross and his crew didn't leave empty handed though, as the team left the stage with a huge haul of silverware for their efforts including: The Governor

General's Cup for first overall in CSA 5, Best British Race Charter Yacht, Royal Southern Yacht Club Shield Trophy for the Inter-Yacht Club Challenge and the Peter Deeth Trophy for 2nd overall in CSA 1-6.

Sir Peter Harrison's Super Maxi Sojana racing in CSA 1 was close to winning the Lord Nelson Trophy for the second time and the crew were in good spirits as they took to the stage to receive multiple awards. They broke into song, singing 'Happy Birthday' to both the regatta and Sir Peter

who celebrated his 80th birthday during the week. Sojana's trophy haul included: the Curtain Bluff Trophy for the overall win in CSA 1, The Corum Cup for winning overall in CSA 1-6, and the Fletcher Trophy for Best British Yacht.

Fritz Bus's St Maarten Melges 24, Team Island Water World had an epic battle in CSA 6 with Antigua National Sailing Academy's Cork 1720, Spirit, skippered by Jules Mitchell. Team Island Water World won the class and Best Caribbean Boat in Start Boat A. Spirit was the Best Antiguan



Boat in Start Boat A. After a keenly contested duel it was great to see the two teams sharing a photograph at the Awards Ceremony.

The K3 Foundation, racing Kialoa III and Clint Brooks' Bajan TP52 Conviction had a fantastic regatta; both yachts scoring seven bullets to win their respective classes, CSA 2 and CSA 3.

Winning the Big Banana Trophy for Best Caribbean Yacht and the Grant Thornton Trophy for Best Boat Overall in CSA 7-9 was Cary Byerley and Sir Robbie Ferron's Micron 99 Lord Jim from St Maarten. The team had to overcome a 1.5 point deficit in the last race to their long term rivals, Sir Bobby Velasquez and his St

Maarten team racing L'Esperance. They went on to achieve victory by just two seconds!

"Two seconds and half a point; shockingly dramatic," commented Ferron. "I could never believe it would be that close. In all my years, I have never won a regatta like that and I doubt if anyone else has. For the last three years, I have been racing against Bobbie in many regattas and we have always just missed out. I have great respect for him so we have a great ambience. Reflecting on how Antigua Sailing Week had evolved, this regatta has done the right things for the competitors and it is getting the appropriate response. Sailors are enjoying the

experience and that is why it has such a great turnout and I believe that the momentum will continue beyond the 50th regatta."

Antiguan, Sir Hugh Bailey won the Lord Nelson Trophy last year and was second in CSA 3 this year with a new acquisition, his Farr 45 Rebel-B. Bailey has been involved in all 50 editions of Antigua Sailing Week.

"Back when it all started, if you told me that 50 years on we would have thousands of people racing in Antigua from all over the world, I would have said that was far from our thinking. I am happy to see the growth and I feel privileged because I am the only captain from the early days still alive and on the race course. This year I really enjoyed my new boat Rebel-B; we

have a lot to learn, and I am sure we will get the boat even faster," he said.

Winning the Dream Yacht Charter Trophy and one week Bareboat charter from Antigua was Mike Cannon & Neil Harvey's KHS&S Contractors from Florida, USA. "The team has won multiple times all over the Caribbean, but this was its first trip as a team to Antigua Sailing Week.

"I cannot believe how good this experience has been," Cannon commented. "The crew and the people in Antigua have been just fabulous - unreal. I am not sure why it has taken us so long to come here. I have been to a lot of regattas in my life and this is one of the best places I have ever been and you can be sure we will be coming back!"





WELCOME TO THE CARIBBEAN'S NATURE PARADISE

With tropical rainforest covering two-thirds of the island, fascinating geothermal activity, and some of the best diving sites in the world, it is unsurprising that Dominica has become known as the “nature island of the Caribbean.” Sparsely populated by just 70,000 people, Dominica remains beautifully unspoiled compared to many other Caribbean islands. Until comparatively recently its tourism trade remained quieter than many of

its neighbors but more visitors are now discovering this jewel of the eastern Caribbean.

Recognizing that intensive tourism would be incompatible with preserving the island's eco-system, the government has focused on attracting eco-tourists ever since signing an agreement with Green Globe, the environmental division of the World Travel and Tourism Council, to develop the island as a “model eco-tourism destination” in 1997.

Dominica is a hikers' paradise with 300 miles of trails snaking their way through the lush rainforest, which contains an amazing 1,200 different plant species. As a volcanic island, it also boasts extensive geothermal activity including the world's second-largest boiling lake, which is found inside the Morne Trois Pitons National Park, the first designated UNESCO World Heritage Site in the eastern Caribbean.



Dominica is the only Caribbean island with a surviving population of pre-Columbian Carib Indians. Originally from South America, the Carib Indians began migrating to Dominica in 3000BC, calling the island “Wai'tukubuli”. More than 2,000 Caribs remain on the island, inhabiting a 3,700 acre territory in the north-west.

The island's architecture reflects its diverse heritage, combining English, French, and Spanish influences. Some of the old colonial buildings and plantation estates are a must see for island visitors, along with a walking tour through the historic capital city of Roseau.

Following independence Dominica developed a successful banana trade but this went into sharp decline in the 1990s when the island lost preferential access to the UK market. The government has since





turned its focus to building Dominica's reputation as a centre for eco-tourism.

Due to its rocky terrain, lack of white sand beaches and basic infrastructure, Dominica has not been targeted by large scale tourist development but the government is now investing heavily in its eco-tourism offering which consists largely of hiking in the rainforest.

An increasing number of cruise ships are now visiting the island following significant investment in cruise ship facilities including the cruise ship jetty at Prince Rupert Bay, near Portsmouth. P&O Cruises, Carnival Cruise, Princess Cruise Lines and Royal Caribbean all now stop off in Dominica. This has pushed annual visitor numbers to up to well over 350,000 with the vast majority – nearly four fifths – arriving via cruise ship.



The island's tourism trade took a hit in 2015 in the aftermath of Tropical Storm Erika which all but wiped out some communities like Petite Savanne, displacing hundreds of families, after ten inches of rain fell in just a few hours. Roseau was engulfed by water and the island's transport infrastructure was brought to a standstill, generating a huge recovery bill for the nation. The storm also damaged several hotels and led to the cancellation of the World Creole Music Festival.



The damage to Douglas-Charles Airport in August 2015 meant it was closed until September, leading to a 5.8 percent decline in total passenger arrivals by air and sea to 107,553. There were a total of 367,657 visitors in 2015 – a four percent decline from 382,413 in 2014 – of which 279,474 arrived via cruise ship while 74,474 were overnight visitors. This represented an 8.6 percent drop in overnight visitors from 81,511 in 2014 but preliminary figures suggested some recovery

in 2016 to more than 78,000.

Most overnight tourists to Dominica come from other parts of the Caribbean with about 20,000 arriving from the French West Indies and a further 10,000 or so from the Commonwealth of the Caribbean. The USA is also a major source of tourism for the island with just under 20,000 visitors from the States in both 2014 and 2015. The UK and France are the biggest European tourist markets for Dominica with between 4,000 - 5,000 from each country arriving in 2014.

Named as one of 'The world's ten best ethical destinations' in 2015, 2014, and 2011 by Ethical Traveler, Dominica is famed for its dense rainforest, rushing rivers and cascading waterfalls, steep gorges and bubbling mud baths as well

OPENING LINES



as a breath-taking biological diversity.

The island is home to the Caribbean's first long distance trail, the Waitukubuli National Trail, which passes through the Carib Territory and the Morne Trois Pitons National Park. The trail takes in the island's history, culture and community life, vast array of wildlife and natural beauty. Famous tourist areas include natural beauty spots such as the Indian River in Portsmouth, the Emerald Pool, Trafalgar Falls and Scott's Head.

The island also offers fantastic diving spots due to its colorful coral reefs and steep drop-offs. Divers can encounter seahorses, frogfish, flying gurnards, batfish, electric rays and much more. Dominica's sub-aqua world mirrors its dramatic landscape above, with canyons and cliffs plunging to depths equal to the soaring mountain peaks above. Underwater volcanoes are the source of Dominica's rugged ocean landscape with craters, chasms and soaring pinnacles

formed by lava flow.

Divers can swim through warm bubbling waters created by geothermal vents at the "Champagne" dive site. Amazing volcanic features can be viewed at Soufrière Scott's Head Marine Reserve in the south west, which is the oldest reserve on the island while the Cabrits National Park Marine Section in the north is famed for its variety of rare fish.

Thanks to its natural beauty, Dominica was

one of the key filming locations for *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* in 2002 and its follow-up, *At World's End*. Hampstead Beach, Indian River, Londonderry River, Soufrière, and Vieille Case, were all used for filming.

With six of its hotels recognised in the prestigious 2013 TripAdvisor Travelers' Choice Island Awards, Dominica has not succumbed to the mass tourism development of other Caribbean islands, focusing on quality rather than quantity.



BELIZE CYBER SECURITY SYMPOSIUM RAISES AWARENESS OF REGION-WIDE PROBLEM

Large, well-funded, and highly organized crime syndicates are behind many of the cybercrimes taking place in the Caribbean. And regional governments and security agencies are challenged to respond.

“Today’s cybercriminal is no longer just a computer geek looking to see what mischief he can create. Modern cybercriminals are increasingly being employed, trained, and resourced by transnational crime syndicates,” said Sean Fouché, information and communications technology manager at CARICOM IMPACS, an agency responsible for regional crime and security.

“Recent reports have revealed that cybercrime is now even more profitable than the global drug

trade. Based on intelligence from the Regional Intelligence Fusion Centre, we are also seeing that cybercrime is now being coupled with the illicit drug trade and human trafficking. This is feeding into a much larger issue of transnational crime.”

Fouché was speaking at Belize’s first national cybersecurity symposium, held in Belize City from April 24 to 28. “The Internet is now being used by terrorist organizations to recruit young people in the Caribbean. CARICOM IMPACS is looking at the link between these terrorist activities and the region’s illicit drug trade. What we’re seeing is that it’s all connected,” he said. He added that cybercrime is a regional problem that requires a coordinated regional response. “This is why CARICOM is

working to assist Belize as well as other governments of the region.”

Unlike almost every other Central and South American country, but like most Caribbean nations, Belize has “neither a cyber-defense policy, nor a national Computer Security Incident Response Team,” according to a 2016 report on Latin American and Caribbean cybersecurity by the Organization of American States and Inter-American Development Bank.

To address this, Belize organized a week-long national cyber security symposium to draw participants from the public as well as from law enforcement, the judiciary and legal community, government and the private sector. The symposium was jointly organized by the PUC and the Caribbean

Network Operators Group, CaribNOG, a non-profit organization that focuses on cybersecurity and technical capacity building.

“The high turnout at Belize’s cyber security symposium is indicative of the importance of the subject, not just to technocrats or technology experts, but to everyone,” said John Avery, Chairman of the Public Utilities Commission (PUC), which regulates to Belize telecommunications sector. “This is the first time that such an event has happened in Belize. Based on the high level of public interest we are also hoping this can be used as a model to usher in a new period of cyber security awareness and preparedness across the entire Caribbean,” Avery said.

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2007 - 2017
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OCR
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I am hit with a board
Burned with an iron
This is abuse.
And you know about it.
BREAK THE SILENCE

I am called worthless
Stupid and good
for nothing
This is abuse.
And you know about it.
BREAK THE SILENCE

I am touched
Night after night
This is abuse.
And you know about it.
BREAK THE SILENCE

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About Suggest Edits

Mission
The OCR provides a confidential central system to receive, record, assess and refer reports for investigation and maintains a register of child abuse reports

JAMAICA AUGMENTS MISSING CHILD PREVENTION AND RECOVERY EFFORTS WITH FACEBOOK ALERT SYSTEM

The month of May is Child Month in Jamaica -- an official designation that has been embraced over the years by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the public in general. In light of ongoing concerns over the welfare of children in Jamaican society, the National Child Month Committee (which dates back to 1953) chose this year's theme as "Take Action! Break the Chain of Abuse Against Children."

On May 1, the Jamaican government and Facebook embarked on a partnership to broaden the reach of missing children alerts on the island -- the first time that Jamaica has harnessed social media for this purpose. Although Jamaicans and others have often used social media informally to post pictures of missing adults and children, there are inherent dangers, including possible legal problems, associated with this. Jamaica is

working on creating a more efficient system that will include the more than 1.2 million Jamaicans currently using Facebook.

The issue of missing children is far more complex than one might think. In Jamaica, as in other countries, the factors that lead to a child's disappearance may include human trafficking, border security, and parental custody issues.

However, according to the Global Missing Chil-

dren's Network (GMCN) -- which has 25 member countries, including Jamaica -- there are few reliable statistics on missing children around the world. In many countries, such statistics are not available at all, and neither are missing child alert protocols. The GMCN suggests the issue is further complicated by the lack of a clear, universal definition of "missing children".

At least in Jamaica, there has been a docu-



mented decline in the number of missing children largely due to the initiation of the Ananda Alert (similar to the Amber Alert system in the United States). Still, around ten percent of them are not found each year.

According to the Missing Person Monitoring Unit of the Jamaica Constabulary Force, 1,725 children went missing in 2016, 269 of whom were not found. The Jamaican alert system is named after 11-year-old Ananda Dean, who was abducted on her way home from school in 2008 and her body found days later. The alert program was established the following year.

Under the new arrangement, Facebook's director of trust and safety Emily Vacher, who at-

tended the program's May 1 launch in Kingston, noted that Jamaica and the Office of the Children's Registry (OCR) are leaders in this area.

"When Facebook receives an alert from OCR, within 15 minutes that alert will be prepared and disseminated to the public," she stated.

"When you see this missing child alert it pops up as an Active Ananda Alert that will have the picture of the missing child and a brief description. When you click 'Learn More' it will take you off Facebook to the page prepared by the Global Missing Children Network (GMCN), where you will see the age, height, weight, last clothing seen in, and a description of the vehicle or license plate number if all that was witnessed."

She further explained that there will be a share button for users to post to their Facebook timelines and monitor developments there. Vacher pointed out that the omission of the "Like" or "Comment" buttons was deliberate, in order to prevent people from giving tips on recovering the child in a place that might not be monitored. Vacher said, too, that the alerts that currently exist in traditional media will not be replaced; rather, they will be enhanced using Facebook.



US CUSTOMS AND BORDER PROTECTION HOSTS BORDER SECURITY PROFESSIONAL EXCHANGE IN BARBADOS

On April 25-27, United States Customs and Border Protection hosted a border security professional exchange with Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Advance Passenger Information System (APIS) member states and regional partners focused on issues of mutual concern related to border management throughout the Caribbean.

The exchange was designed to increase collaboration between international partners and the United States government on border security. Subject matter experts led robust and productive discussions on topics such as foreign terrorist fighters, border security, migration trends, and countering criminal networks.

Participants included leaders working in customs, immigration, and police operations, as well as permanent secretaries from the following CARICOM member states: Antigua and Barbuda, Barbados, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname, and Trinidad and Tobago. Additional participants included border security professionals from the Dominican Republic, Panama, and the United States; as well as the Netherlands, the



United Kingdom, and those two nations' respective overseas territories.



The three-day exchange was funded by the US Department of State under the Caribbean

Basin Security Initiative but did not include any "police leaders" from Saint Lucia, which is subject to sanctions under the Leahy Amendment to the Foreign Assistance Act, restricting US aid to the island's police force.

According to a State Department spokesperson, the US government invited St. Lucia's permanent secretary, deputy comptroller, and assistant comptroller of Customs to focus on border security challenges.

The professional exchange opened with keynote remarks from the US Ambassador to Barbados, the Eastern Caribbean and the OECS, Linda Taglialatela, and Rayburn Blackmoore, Minister of Justice, Immigration and National Security for Dominica and Chair of the Council for National Security and Law Enforcement within CARICOM.

"For the region's borders to be secure, we must not only work within our sovereign states to identify and implement action," Taglialatela said. "We must also seek input from Caribbean and US government agencies, and our partner nations around the globe. That is how we effectively secure our communities and protect our citizens -- and our families."

TOP 10 RUMS IN THE CARIBBEAN

ENGLISH HARBOUR 1981 RUM, ANTIGUA

The Rolls Royce of the list. If you ever see this on a menu, treat yourself to what most refer to as THE top rum in the Caribbean.

EL DORADO SPECIAL RESERVE 21 YEAR OLD, GUYANA

This may be a bit more for the advanced rum drinker, but a couple of sips will showcase the full flavor of this award-winning gem of Guyana.

DON Q GRAN AÑEJO, PUERTO RICO

Big deep flavors come from aging in both whiskey and bourbon barrels. Great for after a big dinner.

HAVANA CLUB AÑEJO 15 AÑOS, CUBA

If you haven't booked your ticket yet, here's yet another reason. Enjoy over ice with some jazz.

RHUM BARBANCOURT ESTATE RESERVE, HAITI

Get that cola out of here! This baby was made to taste...

CLEMENT SINGLE CASK, MARTINIQUE

Despite being one of the smaller and lesser known rums on this list, Clement easily makes up for it in taste with knock-you-out caramel tones.

APPLETON ESTATE EXTRA 12 YEAR OLD JAMAICAN RUM, JAMAICA

The mecca of the group. (The 12yr. is our personal fav.)

MOUNT GAY ECLIPSE GOLD, BARBADOS

Easily one of the most interesting rums on the list; one of the best to use for mixed drinks, but a whole world of subtle flavor if sipping on its own.

TORTUGA CITRUS HONEY, CAYMAN ISLANDS

Great beginner rum for those still new to this world.





The best of
**Travel &
Tourism**

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HOSPITALITY AND TOURISM ONLINE



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The ACCRA BEACH HOTEL AND SPA

A friendly paradise awaits you!



The Accra Beach Hotel and Spa is ideally located on three-and-a-half lush, tropical acres, right on one of the most spectacular beaches in southern Barbados - a long, sun-kissed stretch of soft white sand that is home to the gentle waves of the Caribbean Sea. "Our location is a unique selling point," says General Manager Suresh Monickoraja. "We have a fabulous location. Our beach is one of the best in Barbados - ideal for beachgoers." In addition, the property is very strategically located - it's 15 minutes from the Grantley Adams International Airport, and just 10 minutes from Bridgetown, the capital of Barbados, with its many shops, restaurants, and historical sites.

Monickoraja explains that the hotel's original owners came from Ghana, and in the 1920s, named their original, three-bedroom guesthouse after that African nation's capital city. In the late 1960s, they expanded the property to 50 rooms and 34 apartments. The current owners, the Charles family from Trinidad, bought the hotel in

AT A GLANCE THE ACCRA BEACH HOTEL AND SPA

WHAT: A 158 room, 64 suite resort

WHERE: Rockley Beach, Barbados

WEBSITE: www.accrabeachhotel.com

THE ACCRA BEACH HOTEL AND SPA



1970 and reconstructed it to offer 128 rooms. “In 2007, the hotel completed another wing consisting of 18 new suites and a renovated restaurant,” says Monickoraja. “They decided to expand it further with 78 more rooms and a spa.”

Today, the Accra Beach Hotel and Spa consists of 158 rooms and 64 suites; the Chakra Spa, which features six treatment rooms, a sauna, and a steam room; four restaurants and three bars – one with a



swim-up option; two outdoor pools; four conference rooms; a business center; a beauty salon; a fitness center; and a kids’ club. All accommodations include free Wi-Fi, coffeemakers, mini fridges, cable TV, air conditioning, a direct dial phone, an in-

room safe, and quality bathroom amenities. The majority of its rooms and suites include a spacious, private balcony, while luxury suites feature Jacuzzis and living areas with the added option of a private bar.

Refurbishing at the Accra is an ongoing process. “Since I came two-and-a-half years ago, we have refurbished the entire lobby, we renovated the meeting and conference rooms, and we beautified the landscape,” says Monickoraja. “Currently, we are concentrating on the original wing. We will be refurbishing it from May to November, so then, all our rooms will be on par. We also will be working on one of our all-day-dining restaurants, which has been untouched for a long time.”

Speaking of dining, the Accra is not an all-inclusive hotel, although that option is available for those who prefer it. And while there are many wonderful eateries nearby, the hotel also offers its own array of fine dining choices: the Accra Deck Restaurant, with outdoor seating

that overlooks the ocean, features local foods as well as contemporary European cuisine; the Pacifika Kitchen Restaurant features Japanese, Chinese, Thai, and Indonesian fare; the Coco-Patch Restaurant is a casual spot for breakfast or lunch; and the Fig Tree Restaurant serves specialty dinners on Tuesdays and Thursdays with live music and entertainment.

Monickoraja says that most of the hotel’s guests come from the U.K, followed by the U.S. and Canada. It is open year round, and has an average occupancy rate of 79 percent, with almost 60 percent of its guests, repeat visitors. It employs an average of 270 employees, a number that increases during the high season. Guests are recruited via tour operators, travel

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agents, and an extensive use of print and social media.

Monickoraja adds that the Accra is just as popular with the locals as it is with its international clientele. "It's the heart of the local community," he states. "Karaoke nights are very popular and we attract a lot of locals, and our Sunday lunch is predominantly local. We enhanced the theme nights and introduced a new one called 'Curry and Kabob.' It's very popular with local guests."

Staying current with sustainable practices is also important to the hotel's operation and character. It buys produce from small, local farmers and fishermen; there is a solar panel for hot water, and a prop-



erty-wide recycling initiative. The hotel's use of paper has been reduced, and it uses bio-degradable products and green chemicals whenever possible.

Finally, Monickoraja stresses that the Accra's personal service mirrors the warm, gracious, and hospitable manner of the Barbadian people. "Some of the staff has been here for many, many years," he says. "There is a lot of personalized engagement and personal commitment to customers. And Barbados is considered one of the safest destinations in the Caribbean. It gives a sense of comfort for travelers to come and experience the beauty, and the sunshine, and the sea, and the culture of this beautiful Caribbean island."

PREFERRED VENDORS

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LANTANA RESORT – BARBADOS/ ISLAND VILLAS

Lantana

RESORT – BARBADOS / ISLAND VILLAS



AFFORDABLE LUXURY ON THE PLATINUM COAST

Situated steps away from the glittering shoreline of Barbados' famed Platinum Coast and directly opposite the inviting waters of Alleyne's Bay, sits a luxury 45-unit apartment community, the Lantana Resort. Developed by the Candelisa Company based in the UK, Lantana combines tropical living with a modern aesthetic and offers budget-friendly accommodation in one of Barbados' most prestigious locales.

Lantana boasts a mix of one, two, three and four bedroom apartments, each outfitted with air-conditioned bedrooms, fully equipped kitchens, complimentary Wi-Fi, washer, dryer

and flat-screen TV. Guests can enjoy views of the coastline from the spacious balconies or relax on the sun loungers by the two communal swimming pools on site.

The resort is ideally located within a short



AT A GLANCE LANTANA RESORT – BARBADOS

WHAT: A luxury 45-unit apartment community

WHERE: Platinum Coast, Barbados

WEBSITE: www.island-villas.com/Barbados/Villas-For-Rent/Lantana-Weston-St-James

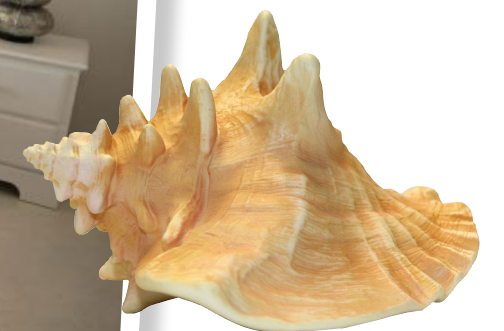
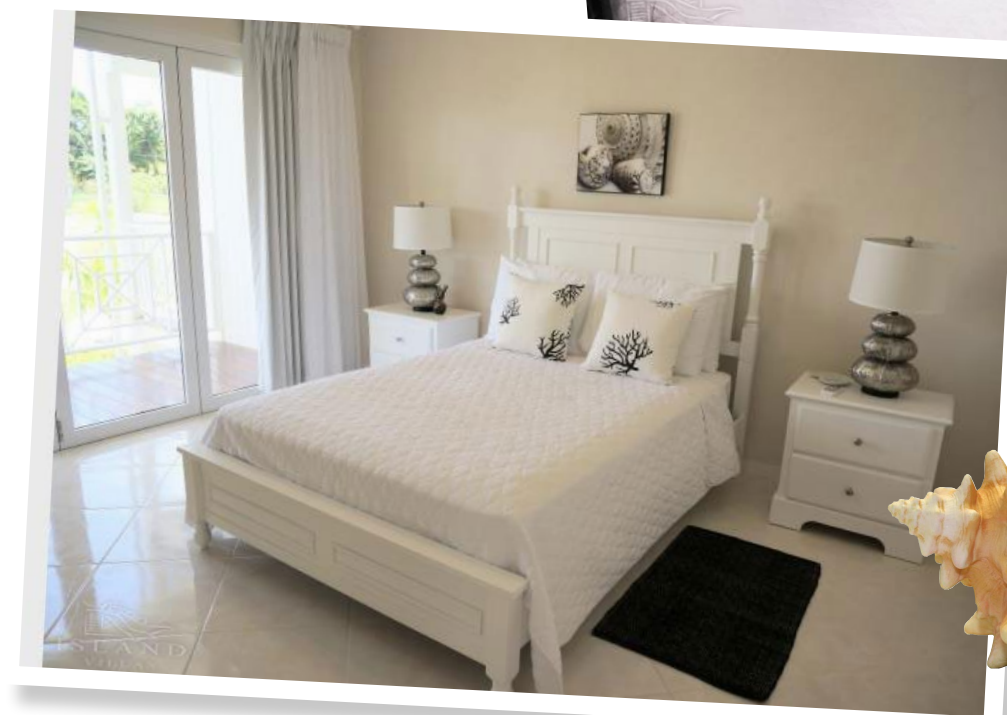
driving distance of some of Barbados' best dining, entertainment, nightlife, shopping, and historic sites. Approximately 5-7 minutes away are popular restaurants such as the Lonestar and Mullins Beach Bar, prestigious golf courses at Royal Westmoreland, Apes Hill, and Sandy Lane, and duty-free shopping at Limegrove Lifestyle Centre. Lantana also sits between the hubs of bustling Holetown and quaint Speightstown, offering guests a glimpse of Barbados' diversity, vibrant history, and rich culture.

Each unit at Lantana is privately owned and approximately half of the units are managed by boutique real estate agency, Island Villas. A Caribbean company with an extensive global network, Island Villas offers a wide range of services including property management, villa rentals, sales, and a premium concierge. At present, the company maintains four employees at Lantana - two housekeepers, a night watchman and a property manager. According to Olivia Cossey, Island Villas' Sales & Marketing Manager, the company is also planning to expand its presence with a concierge representative on site two days a week. "As the demand for Lantana



has increased we want to ensure that all of our guests' needs are met and that whether you are visiting Barbados for the first time or returning, we have someone there to discuss activities, tours, and to help you plan your perfect vacation."

Cossey also explains the unique appeal of Lantana and credits the resort's affordability as a primary reason for its popularity. "Barbados is a premium travel destination and the West Coast in particular attracts international celebrities, annually. As a result, the island's most expensive hotels and accommodation options tend to be located along this Coast and are notably higher priced than other parts of the island. Lantana represents an affordable option for most travelers while still offering amazing amenities and a luxury experience. Another highlight is the apartment concept providing guests with a full kitchen and other conveniences not available at the standard hotel."



Rental stays at Lantana are highly variable and the average yearly occupancy rate is just under 60 percent. “With some of the units the owners may come and stay two weeks out of the year, so they are on the rental market for the majority of the year,” Cossey says. “Barbados is a highly seasonal destination with high season being November to April. At the Lantana price point, however, we find that there is consistent interest year round so in the summer months, when things are typically quiet and many hotels are experiencing a dramatic drop in bookings, we are still receiving rentals. Due to the number and type of enquiries, we usually maintain a three night minimum stay although we may allow nightly rentals where it is possible.

Our guests tend to stay a minimum of a week but we have had requests for longer stays like four months and if we can accommodate them, we do.”

Island Villas promotes the resort via email marketing, social media, and via rental portals including booking.com and Expedia. “With the current global environment, we have seen a shift in the profile of the traveler coming to Barbados,” says Cossey. “We have had more interest in affordable luxury and budget-friendly options and we have worked with our reservations and property management team to ensure that our portfolio offers a wide range of accommodation options to suit every budget.”



PREFERRED VENDORS

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THE CLUB

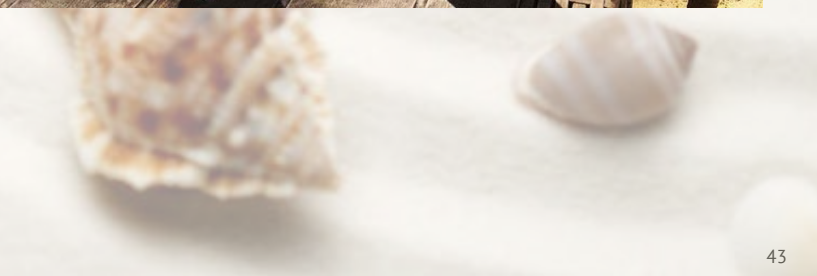
Barbados

RESORT & SPA

CONNECTING WITH ONE'S INNER TRANQUILITY

The Club Barbados Resort & Spa is an oceanfront, all-inclusive getaway on the Barbados west coast – also called the Platinum Coast of the island. Within walking distance of historic Holetown, visitors to this Adults-Only, Caribbean favorite are spoiled for choice in how to spend their days – and nights – with traditional sun, sand and sea, heritage, exceptional food and drink, and the experience of connecting with one's inner tranquility.

General Manager, Andrew Zephirin, shares the resort's back story, its present-day enhancements and the genuinely natural hospitality of its team members that makes the Club Barbados a very special, repeat destination for



THE CLUB BARBADOS RESORT & SPA

international travellers who desire a tranquil setting to reconnect while still having activities and water sports readily available. “The Club has always been an all-inclusive resort for adults 16 years and over,” he begins. “First opened in the late 1970s, under Divi property management, it has had at least three flags in its history including the Almond & Pineapple brands. The current property owner, Elite Island Resorts Caribbean, is a collection of uniquely individual, all-inclusive

AT A GLANCE THE CLUB BARBADOS RESORT & SPA

WHAT: Adults-only, all-inclusive, Elite Island Resorts property

WHERE: Barbados’ West Coast; just south of Holetown

WEBSITE: www.theclubbarbados.com

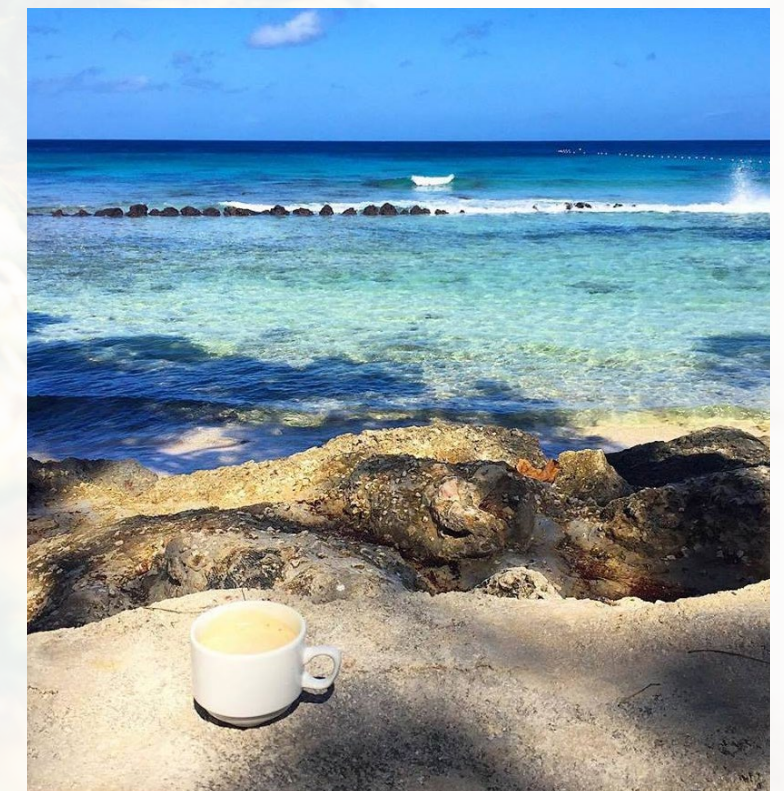
properties with other locations in Antigua, St. Lucia, Tortola, and Palm Island in the Grenadines.”

Today, guests can enjoy cuisine with an international flare or Caribbean classics at the Club’s two restaurants: The Sunset Restaurant (casual ocean-front dining, just steps from the ocean-edge), and Enid’s Restaurant (a colorful air-conditioned Bajan-style venue serving up authentic Caribbean fare and warm hospitality). There are four thirst-quenching

bars, including the ever-popular, ocean-edge Beach Bar (with its famous “Green Monkey” Suntail), the lively De Rum Shop Bar (home of weekly Rumology sessions), and the laid-back sing-along-until-2AM Piano Bar.

The Club Barbados is open year round with approximately 160 permanent employees on staff, although, that number fluctuates with the seasons. The property is adults-only, meaning no guests under the age of 16. There are 158 rooms and suites, spanning six tempting categories: Garden/Pool View rooms, Ocean Loft rooms, Superior Oceanfront rooms, Superior Garden/Pool View suites, One-Bedroom Garden/Pool View Suite, and One-Bedroom Oceanfront Suite. Complimentary wireless internet is available throughout the resort. Most guests, by far, hail from the United Kingdom and Europe. The remainder come from the U.S., Canada, and other Caribbean islands.

All rooms in the hotel have been outfitted with new case goods, including bedding, nightstands, chest of drawers, occasional chair with a footrest, suite sofas and coffee tables, plus fridge cabinets. Refurbishing continues, but the hotel is not closing; work is done during troughs of occupancy, when rooms are available. As part of the renovations, all bathrooms are





being upgraded. So far, about 65 percent of the bathrooms have been done; the scope of work includes re-tiling, new fittings, new tubs, and tub-shower conversions. In addition, new airtight, soundproof windows are being installed in every bathroom. About ninety percent of that work is done.

Regarding marketing initiatives, Zephirin explains, "We have a robust online presence with travel agents, partnerships with all the major tour operators in the U.K. Europe, and North America, and a healthy repeat-clientele factor

who book directly with Elite or with their favorite team member just prior to them departing the Resort on their current stay. What we're looking at currently are small incentive or reunion-groups, 15 to 50 rooms double occupancy. We just redid our meeting room which can accommodate 75 people theater-style, 45 persons banquet-style, and 125 persons reception-style when using the pre-function verandah space."

When courting smaller groups that suit the nature and size of the resort, Zephirin adds, "We strive to target group profiles that will comple-



ment our individual guest experience. Market-mix diversification is key to maintaining higher occupancies so penetrating the Dive, Heritage and Sports niche markets is certainly in our future. Being on the water and located in Historic Hometown definitely assists this effort."

"The Club Barbados Resort & Spa promises an absolutely stress-free, restful stay experience in a child-free environment, with a world-class Boutique Spa to soothe the routine of your life away," Zephirin points out. "If you want to reconnect in a meaningful way with your partner, this is the place." Reconnection can be done totally relaxed or with full participation in activities, such as a wide array of motorized or non-motorized water sports. There are three freshwater swimming pools, a freshwater Jacuzzi, tennis (court-lit for night play), a fitness center, snorkeling, windsurfing, reef-fishing, water skiing, kayaking, and paddle boarding, with skippered or self-sale catamaran sailing. Off-property excursions such as a rum and history tour in historic



Holetown, a turtle feeding trip or a sunset cocktail cruise can be arranged for a truly authentic Bajan experience. When it's time to relax, the luxurious Tranquility Spa offers a full range of services, including massages, facials, a nail salon, and a menu of herbal treatments. Gender specific sauna and steam rooms are available. Spa packages are available for purchase at the resort.

Zephirin acknowledges, "Some visitors to the island like to take part in a full slate of activities. Others like to do nothing at all. We offer the best of both worlds here. That's our unique

selling proposition, that we have this blend. You can have a relaxed time, and there's no pressure to take part in activities. But if you do want to get up and be more active than yesterday, being all-inclusive, there is the capacity for a more active stay experience."

The Club has no large strategic plans for expansion, because they're on a very tight footprint, geographically. "However," Zephirin emphasizes, "our approach to our guests is to build relationships, to encourage emotional attachments with who serves them, so they feel like family and that we know what they



want (before the request), when they want it and, of course, if they want it on a particular day – because even though they like a certain experience, they may not want to have it seven days a week. Maybe five days, and then for two days, try something else. That may sound like something everybody else is doing, but we have a very strong number of repeat guests. A lot of people come here to make friends, and they come back together. To complement that, we want to have a far more individualized approach to those customers, so we note their habits and tastes unbeknownst to them. We then empower our staff to act on these guest preferences as soon as they step on property; this delights our guests as





it is unexpected.

Long-term business relationships are also key to the successful operation of the resort. Travel partners in the U.K. are very important from the revenue side. These include Faraway Places, Thomson Holidays, Virgin Vacations, British Airways (BA Vacations), Saga Holidays, and Tropical Skies. Online, The Club uses bookings.com and Expedia. And, it depends on a great relationship with Trip Advisor to monitor customer scores from an online rating perspective. BTMI (Barbados Tourism Marketing Inc.) is a national organization promoting Barbados. The Club Barbados partners with them to bring Travel Industry fam-trip to the island.

Zephirin sums up the Club Barbados Resort & Spa experience as one of reconnection with people you know and who know you. “People come here to relax and find themselves again; to have a carefree, tranquil experience. We are right on the ocean; we don’t have a beach in front of the hotel, but we have a beach terrace that overlooks the ocean. My guests tell me when they think about the experience here, it encourages them to forget their normal activities and concerns back home, and just escape from reality. We specialize in individualized service, which might seem non-unique, but our employees have been here for quite some time – several for 12 or 13 years. They know a lot of



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guests as personal friends; friends who book directly with them and call them, personally, when returning. After all they are coming back home to family - their Club Family!”

The General Manager concludes by indicating that “the number Two thing people should know about our property is the Cozy nature of the facility, as one guest puts it: ‘I take one step from my room and I am in the pool, another step and I am on the Beach Terrace, another step and I am either at a bar or in the Spa.’ However, the number One thing you should remember about The Club is that it does not have 168 permanent employees but 168 hosts anxious to warmly welcome you back home! Like Heather Hinds , Grill Cook, who won the Caribbean Hotel & Tourism Association (CHTA) Outstanding Employee of the Year 2016, who runs her own Reservations Department, grill-side, for the convenience of guests who prefer to book with “family” than through the traditional channels.”

PREFERRED VENDOR

■ **Ocean Fisheries**

www.facebook.com/OceanFisheriesLtd



Port St. Charles Marina



GATEWAY TO THE BARBADOS RIVIERA

Beckoning from the north-western coast of Barbados, Port St. Charles Marina stirs the heart of seafarers and beach lovers, alike. This luxury lifestyle development overlooks the alluring blue waters of the Caribbean, with beautiful villas and apartments for vacation rental or ownership. High-end homes in the 22-acre community vary from one bedroom to five bedrooms, either fronting the lagoon, or directly on the beach – with one's berth and boat just outside the doorstep.

Port St. Charles was developed by three Barbadian businessmen – Sir Charles Williams, his brother Ralph 'Bizzy' Williams, and Bjorn Bjerkhavn. Bjerkhavn and Sir Charles owned the land,



AT A GLANCE PORT ST. CHARLES MARINA

WHAT: Luxury Caribbean marina resort development

WHERE: NW coast of Barbados, West Indies

WEBSITE: www.portstcharles.com

consisting of two adjacent plots. The men were boaters, they liked fishing, and their dream was to build a resort property on the water with easy access from one's home, right onto one's boat, and out to the Caribbean Sea.

The group discussed the feasibility of creating a marina, and hired architect Ian Morrison to draft the details. The project took many years of working with the Barbadian government to achieve planning permission, which included a port of entry to the country. At the

time, any boater who wanted to travel, say to the Grenadines, needed to go to Bridgetown to clear immigration and customs.

General Manager of Port St. Charles, Stephen Austin, explains, "The government and the developers finally agreed to partner in the construction of a law enforcement building at Port St. Charles, on the north coast of the island, which would be a base for Customs and Immigration, the Coast Guard, and a site to enhance security on Barbados. That's how it all started."

Because Port St. Charles was constructing homes to sell to people outside the country, it was bringing foreign exchange into Barbados. The government saw the benefits, and began offering concessions to encourage both the development and sales. Anyone who purchased property in Port St. Charles could bring a boat into Barbados, duty free, a savings of 40 – 60 percent, depending on the type of boat. They could also bring in their first furniture package for their home, duty free.

"Construction started in 1996," says Austin, "and the plan was not just to build the entire product out and then sell it, but to sell as we went along – in phases. The first phase, we presented plans to interested people, and as soon as we got 60 percent of the sales going we started to build. That allowed potential owners to pay money down on the property, and select certain changes – to tiles, cupboards, countertops. As we went on, we got better at our build, and changed the design according to what people wanted."



The development began with mostly townhouses, or villas, on three levels with a staircase. But more and more people were saying, "If I'm buying this for retirement, I really would like it on one floor." Thus, the apartments became more attractive. The project continued until fully complete, in 2005. The last to be built were beachfront properties – which, instead of houses, were changed to 33 beachfront apartments

- all on one level.

The Port St. Charles development includes a total of 156 homes and 163 berths. A few homes are allotted more than one berth. Austin notes, "Anyone who owns a home has a berth for their boat, complete with electricity and water that runs off the power in their apartment. There is no extra fee for a dock because it's assigned to your unit, as is the car park."



The Port St. Charles Yacht Club is not a yacht club, per se. It's a restaurant created to add a fine dining element for property owners and their visitors. The marina itself is a private residential complex – you can't just sail in from St. Lucia and dock your boat and pay a fee, although, the Port does have six mega-berths on the offshore breakwater for that type of business. They are not part of the marina, but

close to the Yacht Club restaurant, and the Law Enforcement building, where Customs & Immigration, Port Health, and Police are stationed.

On the business side, Austin says, "We have 80 employees in the development company. We also help homeowners self-manage the exterior maintenance of the shared property, through a company we created called Port St. Charles Common Services. It's a committee made up of





10 board members who are homeowners. They have a separate team that deals with the gardens, irrigation, garbage collection, security, and exterior building maintenance. That company employees about 120 people.”

Board members are not paid; they are basically executives that do the cerebral thinking and help the management team with budget decisions such as putting more resources into the gardens or docks. Homeowners pay six months in advance for their common services dues, and have total autonomy in this regard. The development company earns revenue through different services offered to homeowners, including housekeeping, sales, rental, marine supplies, and fuel for boats.

Most Port St. Charles property owners hail from the United Kingdom, with a less signifi-

cant number coming from the U.S. and Canada. There is also some Barbadian ownership – companies investing in properties where they utilize the berths and rent out apartments on a long-term basis. Only about 10 percent of the homeowners are year-round residents; those who live in Barbados, and vacation at Port St. Charles.

According to Austin, about 40 of the 156 homes rent on a long-term basis. “The owners rent to expats, here on business. Some off-shore companies, and institutions such as First Caribbean Bank, rent properties for their employees. Some people live here five, six, seven years, and some



of those, eventually, end up buying. One current homeowner worked here for three years during the First Caribbean Bank transition process from Barclay’s Bank to CIBC, then went away for four years, came back a couple of years ago and bought a home.”

Competition on Barbados is a given, but Port St. Charles is uniquely situated, and strategically planned, to hold its own. Austin says, “We are a stunning, 22-acre property with apartments set on the beachfront, and capacity to dock a boat nearly at your doorstep. The Royal Westmoreland Estate has homes situated right around the golf course. But, people have to drive to the beach. There are other smaller developments in Holetown on the coast, Speightstown, Schooner Bay, all those are set on the beach but they have no capacity to moor a yacht.”





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A group of investors with the JADA Group is building another marina called Port Ferdinand, just north of Port St. Charles. Austin describes Port Ferdinand as “an engineering feat, running inland, with a bridge that opens for boat traffic. It is another competitor of ours, as it is a new build, beautifully designed and furnished, but they don’t enjoy as much beachfront as Port St. Charles. We are pretty unique in what we offer; we are stretched across the beachfront, our properties are one bedroom up to five bedrooms, and you can put your boat right outside.”

There are no plans to expand structurally at Port St. Charles – the emphasis is on keeping the standards high at this already fabulous resort. Austin states, “My main goal is to manage the

resources we have here, and manage our sales. We’ve been doing quite well on the sales front, because even though we are an older, mature property, we are established with a community and a lifestyle that’s been built up over time. There is nothing for people to wait for. We’re finished. We’re complete. The only queries are mostly about, “How often do you paint?” In terms of procedural things, we are going to be offering drinks on our beach soon, and keeping up with the impeccable service level that people expect. No grand plan for changes. When it isn’t broken, don’t worry to fix it.”

Port St. Charles’ relationship with the Republic Bank is an extremely valued one. Austin shares, “They helped up secure a bond to complete our

last three phases. After 9/11, we hit a snag and didn’t know where the money would come from. Since we were selling off plan, and then building, we had no takers in the last three blocks. But we knew it would be sold once people’s confidence returned. So, we shut down construction for a few months, but we didn’t want to lose momentum. Republic Bank secured a bond from Trinidad for 30 million U.S. dollars and that is what finished our product.” Port St. Charles also credits its success to important long-term suppliers including CGM Gallagher Insurance Co., BA Holiday, Expedia, Williams Industries, and Preconco Limited.

Graduating from building entry level homes – one, two, and three bedrooms starting at \$500,000 – to selling homes up to \$6.5 mil-

lion, Port St. Charles created confidence as it progressed, succeeding beyond expectations, because the community was built with the buildings. By the time it was finished, this well-planned development was mature and sought after. Many of those who bought in at entry level have seen an ROI of more than 100 percent; affording the opportunity to sell at the best time of the year.

Austin sums up Port St. Charles as “an example of how it should be done. In terms of planning the development, rolling out the development, and pre-selling it in phases. Some people might call it conservative, but it allowed for changes along the way. It lent itself to creating a lifestyle that grew and developed. When complete, it was easily sold to everybody. They felt welcome.”

PREFERRED VENDOR

■ Republic Bank Barbados Ltd.

www.republicbarbados.com

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THE MONTEGO BAY CONVENTION CENTRE

The MONTEGO BAY

Convention Centre



A WORLD-CLASS VENUE

The Montego Bay Convention Centre (MBCC) is the largest convention facility of its kind in the English-speaking Caribbean. It is situated near the historic Rose Hall Plantation on Jamaica's north coast, some 15 minutes from Sangster International Airport. The Centre is close to over 4,000 luxury hotel rooms, a full-service medical facility, five major shopping centers, three world championship golf courses, and many restaurants and attractions. Its world-class facilities opened in April 2011, and since then, it has been the recipient of the World Travel Award for being the Caribbean's Leading Meetings and Conference Centre, six years in a row. The MBCC is managed by SMG, the world leader in venue management, marketing, and development.

The Montego Bay Convention Centre sits on approximately 23 acres of land that offers stunning views of both the Caribbean coast, and the mountains to its south. Its meeting, exhibition, and ballroom spaces are all housed in three separate buildings and connect via outdoor walkways. This open-air layout provides a number of outdoor event spaces, including the 17,000-square-foot Ocean View Terrace – which accommodates up to 1,500 for banquet-style functions – and the

AT A GLANCE THE MONTEGO BAY CONVENTION CENTRE

WHAT: The largest convention facility of its kind in the English-speaking Caribbean

WHERE: Montego Bay, Jamaica

WEBSITE: www.mbconventioncentre.com



CC'S courtyard, a 25,000 square-foot space capable of holding up to 2,600 guests.

Indoor space totals 139,302 square feet; the largest space is the 57,525 square foot Exhibit Hall, which offers room for 282 booths, as well as 4,700 guests seated banquet-style, or 6,200 seated theatre-style. For special events, the 18,684-square-foot Grand Ballroom can seat up to 1,580 for banquets. There are nine meeting rooms (with a total of 10,161 square feet), with the largest configuration accommodating up to 600 attendees. All spaces are equipped with videoconferencing capabilities and high-speed Internet. On site is a fully integrated broadcast and teleconference system, operated by in-house audiovisual technicians.

Dittie Guise, the General Manager of the Montego Bay Convention Centre, reports that, since opening, the facility has hosted between a hundred and two-hundred-and-thirty



events a year. "There is a mix of clientele, and as we grow over the years, the mix changes," she says. "We have a lot of government-sponsored international events, and a lot of corporations – both local and international. We have few associations, but that will grow as we get more international business in. We are seeing marked increases in Destination Market Weddings and we are also very well attended by the colleges and universities for their graduations. Religious groups have been quite a big draw for us - we've had the

United Church Convocational, and the Jamaica Baptist Union - Jamaica Baptist alone has over 10,000 people in attendance. The Congregation of Jehovah Witnesses just signed with us for four weekends a year for five years."

In a competitive market – Guise says that the MBCC competes with some local hotels for smaller events, and against other countries in the Caribbean for the larger ones – the amenity that she believes sets the Centre apart is its food and beverage department. "One of the things that we get rated on very highly is our food," she states. "Our chef, Randie Anderson, has been educated in Jamaica and in the U.S.; he has a master's degree in Gastronomic Tourism, and he's also the only person in the Caribbean who was ever awarded a scholarship from the James Beard Foundation."

Indeed, before Anderson - who oversees all of the Centre's concessions, catering, and special events - came to run its 15,000 square-foot kitchen, the award-winning chef had already made a name for himself with stints at some of New York's finest restaurants and Jamaica's leading hotels. He has also prepared extravagant meals for the country's last three prime ministers, as well as many foreign dignitaries and celebrities. Since coming to the MBCC, Anderson has catered many major events at other SMG-owned properties in the U.S. as part of Savor, the corporate parent's catering arm.

Another distinguishing characteristic of the



MBCC is its dedication towards preserving the environment. Karron Benjamin, the Centre's Assistant General Manager and Director of Operations, says that its strategy is to "reduce, reuse, and recycle" as much as possible. "We look at our engineering, we look at our food and beverage, and we look at our housekeeping," he states. Regarding engineering, the goal is to reduce the cost of utilities – that means LED lighting accompanied by as much natural light as possible; using air condition-

THE MONTEGO BAY CONVENTION CENTRE

ing only as needed; minimizing the waste of potable water; and using grey water for drip irrigation. Regarding food and beverage, it means growing as many perishables, such as vegetables, on property without the use of any form of fertilizer, other than organic manure, and composting all perishable refuse. Regarding housekeeping, it means using as few chemicals as possible for cleaning and pest management, while re-using whatever possible to keep things from going to the landfill. "Within the next year, we're hoping to go completely green," says Guise. "One of the initiatives of our corporate office is to see how many of the SMG-managed facilities can accomplish that goal."

Recently, the MBCC has been put under the purview of Jamaica's Ministry of Tourism. "When we

were built, we were under the arm of the Urban Development Corporation," Guise reports. "That has been good for us because we were able to get more funding to do more upgrades, and we're part of the tourism package in Jamaica. Now, the Minister of Tourism believes that the Convention Centre is a prime catalyst that will help grow the economy and the Tourist Board has been mandated to work with us more closely."

As for future plans, Guise reveals several. "We're looking down the road to putting a hotel on the property," she says. "We're also looking at the possibility of expanding because we are getting more business. We definitely need more meeting room space and we need more exhibit space. The way things are going, we need to start



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planning for it to take place in the next two or three years.”

Another hoped-for project that aims to capitalize on the Centre’s excellent food and beverage reputation is the establishment of a culinary arts course for recent college and university graduates from around the country. “They will be able to come to the Convention Centre, work under the tutelage of Chef Anderson, and be able to get more practical experience. That will make them more employable,” Guise declares.

As the years unfold, there is no doubt that the Montego Bay Convention Centre will continue to be the Caribbean’s leading venue for world-class meetings, conventions, and events. And the food is pretty good, too.

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■ The Language Cradle

www.thelanguagecradle.com

The Language Cradle is a Jamaican owned subsidiary of International Business and Language Consulting. The company offers language courses, as well as translation and interpreting services for government agencies, embassies, businesses, and individuals in Spanish, French, German, Russian, Portuguese, Dutch, Mandarin, Japanese, Arabic, and other languages.

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S.M.G.

CONSTRUCTION/ MILLWORK

POISED FOR FLIGHT

S.M.G. Construction/Millwork was founded in 2001 by Darren Ginns, who had come to the Bahamas from Australia in the mid 1990s, as a partner in the Whistler Development Company, to head the construction of Sunnyside Estates, a 21-unit, 6-story condominium project in Lyford Cay. The requirement for fine detail and finishes demanded by the owners of this upscale building laid the groundwork for the start of S.M.G. Millwork, and that company began, soon after, offering homeowners custom pieces for

AT A GLANCE S.M.G. CONSTRUCTION/ MILLWORK

WHAT: A custom design and high-end architectural and construction firm

WHERE: Nassau, the Bahamas

WEBSITE: www.smgmillwork.com;
www.smgconstruction.com

kitchens, vanities, walk-in closets, and built-in entertainment units.

Meanwhile S.M.G. Construction, Ginns' other company, has been responsible for building and/or renovating high-end, custom homes in Lyford Cay, Old Fort Bay, Albany, and the Ocean Club Estates. The company has also completed several commercial projects—including a state of the art laundry for the Baha Mar project, an equestrian estate, the Mahogany House Restaurant, and Old Fort Plaza.

In 2015, Business View

Magazine spoke with Ginns several months after a large fire had destroyed the entire millwork building and its offices. Since then, the company has been in recovery mode, hoping to use the loss as an impetus to build a bigger and better operation.

Recently, we caught up with Ginns to find out what direction the company has gone over the past few years. Ginns explained to us that he decided to separate the two companies in order that each grows on its own merits. Through the hardships, he real-

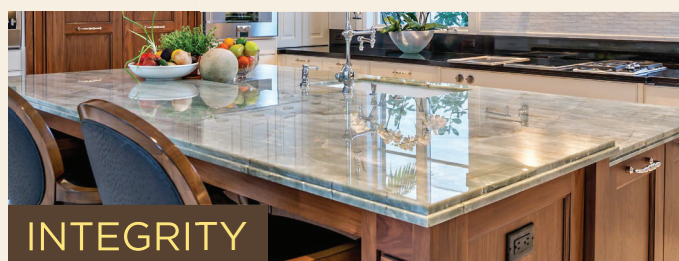
ized that in order to have 100 percent customer satisfaction and create a culture within the business, introducing a leadership program was necessary.

The organizational culture that Ginns speaks to refers to the beliefs and values that have existed in the organization over a long period of time, and to the beliefs of the staff and the value of their work that will influence their attitudes and behaviors.

Therefore, Ginns states, "It is essential to understand the relationship between this organizational culture and leadership behavior to strive for the greatest satisfaction of both employees and customers."

After much research and passion in expanding his knowledge regarding leadership values, Ginns came to the conclusion that "when good leadership is in place in a company, it can be felt throughout the entire organization. With good leadership, corporate culture isn't forced, it's developed. Working with the upper management, the foremen, and our staff, we've been able to focus on suitable leadership for every individual and the progress of creating a vision through which we have begun to see beneficial changes within our business."

In an effort to continue these values, Ginns hired Kenny Cargill, a Motivational Leadership Director. With his background in business, as well as public relations, Kenny was brought on as C.O.O. (Chief Operating Officer) of S.M.G



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Millwork to ensure Ginns' vision is an everyday practice within both companies.

Cargill began with the understanding that while the company has to take care of its customers, it also has to build its people. "We have to allow them to know the core values of the company, the vision of the C.E.O, and we have to build our leaders to understand their roles and how to lead," he states. "We strive for communication being daily and open, and for everyone to understand the vision and goal while also the way in which to personally improve and strive towards success."

Ginns says his inspiration for much of his leadership program came primarily from the works of Jon Gordon's series of novels, most specifically,

"The Energy Bus." This novel takes readers on an enlightening and inspiring ride, revealing ten secrets for approaching life and work with the kind of positive, forward thinking that leads to true accomplishment. "You're the driver of your bus; desire, vision, and focus will move your bus in the right direction. You just have to want it!" he exclaims.

Over the next few years, Ginns says that his aim is to keep growing the design/build part of S.M.G. Construction - 80 percent of the business is currently design/build and the company has four full-time architects on its 90-person staff. "We will be focusing not just on residential, but also on commercial work," he says. He also wants to

expand both companies' reach beyond Nassau, and look for work on the outer islands of the Bahamas. Meanwhile, S.M.G is running both a day and night shift. "That's how fast we've grown," he says. "We're doing an expansion to our spray shop, and we're building an innovative storage facility on the property in congruence with our growing company."

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THE *Belize*

Chamber of Commerce and Industry

CONNECT, CAPACITATE, AND CHAMPION

AT A GLANCE THE BELIZE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY

WHAT: A membership organization mandated to be the voice of Belizean business

WHERE: Belize City, Belize

WEBSITE: www.belize.org



KIM AIKMAN, CHAMBER CEO

The Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry is the largest private sector membership-based organization in Belize. Founded in 1920, the Chamber has been consistently championing the causes of its private sector constituency and considers among its primary objectives the social and economic development of Belize through the development of all sectors of industry, services and commerce. Addi-





tionally, since 1997, the Chamber is the only recognized “Employers Organization” in Belize under the International Labor Organization’s (ILO) tri-partite social partnership.

Currently, the BCCI boasts a fluctuating membership of almost 300 Belizean businesses, representing over 1,500 employers, from a wide cross-section of the agricultural, productive, service, and industrial sectors. The BCCI’s mandate is legally enshrined in Chapter 308 of the Laws of Belize under the Belize Chamber of Commerce & Industry Act. The specific objectives of the organization are as follows:

The goals of the Chamber shall be: to encourage, enhance and promote an investment climate which is favorable to both local and

foreign investors; to continuously work towards the strengthening of the partnership between the public and private sectors, and the growth of private enterprise; to promote and encourage commercial ventures and capital investment; to promote the development of services, agriculture, tourism, fishing, forestry, industry, aquaculture, manufacturing, and other related fields; to undertake, promote, and facilitate economic and financial studies as a guide to investment; to consider, discuss, and take action on questions directly or indirectly relating to or affecting commerce and industry generally, including promoting, supporting, or lawfully opposing legislative or other concerns affecting the entire country; to collect and distribute statistical and

other information relating to commercial services, and the business, tourism, and manufacturing sectors, including the professions and the trades in Belize; to foster and encourage cooperation among private, financial, and non-governmental organizations in the development and use of their human resources to strengthen and improve the economic development of Belize; to promote the development of export-oriented businesses so as to increase foreign earnings and aid growth; to actively promote Belize abroad as an ideal country for foreign investment and a popular destination for tourists; to promote and support the cultural and scientific advancement of Belize with due regard to the protection of the environment and the preservation and promotion of Belize’s cultural heritage; to liaise closely with the Government on matters of national importance and interest; to promote and foster the tri-partite relationship with Government, Employers, and Labor through active participation in, and contribution to, relevant representative organizations and bodies nationally and internationally.

The businesses that are members of the BCCI include, but are not limited to importers, exporters, manufacturers and producers, auto dealers/distrib-





utors, agri-business, agricultural producers, small business enterprises, accountants, attorneys, bankers, engineers, insurance, financial service providers, office communications/computers, airline services, brokers, airline services, brokers, computer (electronic) service providers, furniture manufacturers, publishers, employment and training services, environmental firms, hoteliers, tour operators, transportation,

real estate, trust investment advisors, petroleum, and food and beverage.

In 2010, BCCI adopted its “Triple C Philosophy: To Connect, Capacitate, and Champion.” “We Connect by making meaningful networking and connections between members nationally, regionally and internationally,” explains Kim Aikman, the Chamber’s CEO. “We Capacitate by strengthening skills, abilities and processes that organizations need to adapt and thrive in a rapidly changing world. And on behalf of our members, we Champion their issues to encourage a healthy business environment.”

BCCI offers several membership packages,



including:

- **Member of the President’s Circle** - Leaders and trendsetters who enjoy unfettered access to the movers and shakers and the powerful resources of the Chamber. The members of the President’s circle influence perspectives and set trends in public policy and business leadership.
- **Distinguished Member** - These business visionaries advance their organizations through meaningful networking and





peer interaction. The distinguished member will have greater opportunities to shape public policy and industry development. They enjoy discounted member benefits.

- **Signature Member** - This is the entry point to the powerful resources of the Chamber. This basic membership provides the ability to stay on top of issues affecting the business community, input into policy and advocacy positions and discounted member benefits.
- **Associate Member** – Associate members want to work with the Chamber on a peripheral level; to experience the resources of the Chamber without making a full-fledged commitment.

Association/ Group of Companies Member

Association organizations and Group of Companies who wish to join the Chamber under any of the above four membership levels will be considered as one entity. All Members of the Association and a maximum of five businesses under the Group of Companies will be recognized and will receive full benefits of the respective membership level they have chosen.

- **Individual Member** - Being an Individual Member entitles one to invitations to Trainings and Workshops which feature “Issue” Experts, as well as customized trainings, upon request. In addition, individual members gain access to Chamber Publications which keeps them up to date on issues that impact Belize’s



business society in areas such as international business, and trade and finance.

- **Micro Member** - The Chamber, in a vision to Connect, Capacitate, and Champion members created this new membership tier. A Micro Member is a business employing

less than five full time employees, has gross annual sales of less than BZ \$1,000,000 and has a total investment in plant and equipment of less than BZ \$50,000.00.

The BCCI stays in contact with its members by sending out daily emails with local, regional, and international information, as well as newsletters every quarter. It also has a website and Facebook page. “We are looking to upgrade our website,” says Aikman. “It will give the members and also the general public an easier way to reach us – not just by telephone or email, but they’ll be able to leave messages and blogs, and participate that way.”

“We also have a Customer Relations Man-

agement system (CRM), and whenever we have a certain topic matching a particular sector, the CRM has made it easy to share information with that specific sector,” adds Yorshabell Cattouse, BCCI’s Manager of Member Relations. “We’re out there in the media; we’re out there representing the voice of businesses. In order to interest new members in joining the Chamber, we organize one-on-one visits, as well as ‘Chamber Days.’ A Chamber Day is where we partner with a local school, inviting other Government organizations that businesses regularly interact with, to have informational booths and bring more awareness to the community about the Chamber and the right way to do business.”

“Although the BCCI has its membership spread across the country, we only have one main office in Belize City due to limited human and financial resources. Despite this, our MOU (memorandum of understanding) with the Development Finance Corpora-



tion has made our information available at their countrywide locations. We recently launched a new chapter in Toledo, and we plan to have a chapter in each district and major towns, so that we can have a stronger voice and a stronger presence,” says Cattouse. “A lot of businesses that we have not reached through our membership visits, for example, call into the Chamber because it’s a very much respected organization,” adds Aikman. “The businesses look to us for information and guidance.”

As the Belize Chamber of Commerce and Industry approaches the end of its first century of service, it continues to adhere to its Mission Statement: “To contribute to the sustainable development of Belize through effective representation of the business community.”



BEL-CAR

Export & Import Company Limited

BEANS AND MORE

In the early 1950s, a community of Mennonites emigrated from Mexico to the Spanish Lookout area of Belize. Today, there are about 3,000 members of that community, many who have become vital contributors to the economic growth of their adopted country, and who, as farmers, provide most of its produce, including meat and dairy, poultry and eggs, as well as grain and legumes. The climate and wet conditions in the Spanish Lookout area is especially ideal for beans and corn.

Bel-Car, which stands for Belize-Caribbean, is a cooperative growing and distribution company that was started in 2000 by a group of about 200 of those farmers from Spanish Lookout. "These farmers had been growing beans for the country for a good while, and there was more than the country could consume,"



explains Otto Friesen, Bel-Car's Managing Director. "Belizean leaders, along with some government officials, started looking for an export market, and found it in the Caribbean. There was a private company that had invested a little bit into Belizean bean products, but production increased and demand for quality increased from the market side, and that company wasn't up to the demand. The farmers got frustrated and wanted to expand their production. So, they pooled their resources, purchased the private company, along with a state-of-the-art processing plant, and became Bel-Car."

Within a decade, Bel-Car was shipping some eight million pounds of black-eyed peas throughout the Caribbean and to markets as far away as North, South, and Central America, the Middle East, Asia, Europe, and Australia, making Belize the world's fourth largest exporter of the product. "80 to 85 percent of our production goes to the Caribbean," says Friesen. "The other

AT A GLANCE BEL-CAR EXPORT & IMPORT COMPANY LIMITED

WHAT: A cooperative growing and distribution company

WHERE: Spanish Lookout, Belize

WEBSITE: www.belcar.bz



20 percent goes almost all over the world."

Today, the company continues to export about 6.5 million pounds of black-eyed peas and five million pounds of red kidney beans, every year, with an approximate value of \$US4 million. In addition, Bel-Car exports refined cornmeal, and when available: white corn, yellow corn, hominy corn (cracked corn), corn grits, corn gluten, black beans, and light speckled kidney beans. "We are, by far, the biggest exporter of pulses (dried legumes) and grain



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out of Belize and there's no other company as well organized," Friesen declares. "But there are commodity brokers existing around us, who will buy from the same farmers and export into the same markets to a certain extent. And we do sell some locally, because at harvest times, we never know how much the local consumption will be and how much the farmers kept for local supply, so there are times when we will sell back into the local market, but it's not the main focus of the company," he adds.

Recently, Friesen says that Bel-Car has done



quite a bit of research and planning into value-added food processing. "There are a few of these things that have been on the table for



awhile and we're seriously looking at them, but I'm not sure when they will materialize," he says. "One of them we spent a lot of effort on recently is canned beans. With canning, I don't necessarily mean tin cans; it could well be in other presentations, but ready-to-eat in retail packaging. The

reason for this is that we're finding that people in developed countries – Trinidad, for instance has been a big market for us, for years - Trinidadians don't want to cook their beans, anymore, before they go to work – they just want to buy a ready-made can. And why have somebody else do that? Why not do it ourselves?"

Meanwhile, the company has continued to invest in processing equipment for its raw products, which are generally sold in bulk – 50 and 100 pound bags. "We put in a whole new line of bean processing equipment three years ago," says Friesen. "It's computerized, state-of-the-art equipment that has quality separation, color sorting, and all of that just to ensure that the product





we send out is of good quality.”

Over the last two years, the company has also increased its storage capacity for corn. “We are now capable of storing 25,000 metric tons of corn on the premises,” Friesen states. Unfortunately, that added storage capacity has gone unutilized since then because the last two corn crops were both “a disaster,” he says, ruefully. “A little bit more than a year ago, it was drought; last year, the crop looked really promising and we were expecting a record-breaking crop to be harvested in October, and then Hurricane Earl took that.”

The vicissitudes of weather notwithstanding, Friesen stresses that working through a cooperative such as Bel-Car is still and always the best option for its foreign buyers. “We’re not a commodities broker,” he asserts, “we are grower-owned. Any customer who deals with us deals directly with the farmers. They don’t have all these middlemen to feed. If you come to Bel-Car, you come to the farmers – farm-direct and fresh.”



PREFERRED VENDOR

■ UPL

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BELIZE ROADWAY CONSTRUCTION LTD.

ROAD CONSTRUCTION AND MORE

Belize Roadway Construction (BRC) Ltd. is a full service heavy construction company based in Belmopan, Belize. BRC's emphasis has been in the construction and upgrade of roads to paved standard as well as the execution of civil works to support the oil exploration industry. However, BRC's repertoire of projects ranges from land development, subdivision construction, earthmoving, aggregate production to placing hot mix asphalt.

BRC was founded 13 years ago and has evolved from an earthmoving and land clearing company to a leading road building company in the country. In the past three years, BRC has executed over

15 major projects valued at over 13 Million US Dollars primarily for the Government of Belize through funding from various international development banks and agencies such as the Caribbean Development Bank, the European Union, and the World Bank. These projects have included major roads such as the Hopkins Stann Creek Road, the Belmopan Ring Road, and the Corozal Free Zone main road and have entailed significant improvements to the drainage and pavement layers of several miles of roadway as well as construction of high-strength concrete pavements, traffic light installation, and thermoplastic road markings. Some of the more specialized works BRC has undertaken are the completion of the



AT A GLANCE BELIZE ROADWAY CONSTRUCTION LTD.

WHAT: A full service, heavy construction company

WHERE: Belmopan, Belize

WEBSITE: www.belizeroadway.bz



Crique Sarco Toledo Bridge, and the extension of three bridges on the Hopkins Road, encompassing piling works, precast concrete beams, and concrete abutment and deck construction.

In the private sector, BRC has completed numerous access road, drill platform, and cellar construction projects valued at over 10 Million US Dollars for oil exploration companies such as Perenco Guatemala, US Capital Energy, and Belize Natural Energy Ltd. In addition to heavy construction services, Belize Roadway Construction also offers premium limestone aggregates from its quarry located near Belmopan.

BRC's staff ranges from approximately 40 permanent, full-time workers to an additional 120 employees when multiple projects are underway. The geographical reach of its projects has increased over the years with most of the early projects in the Cayo District, close to BRC headquarters in Belmopan, to more recent projects as far away as the deep south for civil works to compliment the oil exploration industry, and in the north



of the country with the upgrade of the Corozal Free Zone main road.

Daniel Cano, a BRC Project Manager, believes that the company stays ahead of its competition by going the extra mile to complete projects on time and to standard. "This is most evident in the oil exploration industry where deadlines and safety requirements are stringent," he explains. "BRC has demonstrated it is the leading choice in the development of infrastructure to support this industry. This reputation has been earned through BRC's ability to work around the clock when needed, its continued investment in a modern fleet of reliable, heavy equipment, and the retention of skilled and dedicated staff."

Moving forward, Cano says that BRC is forging



new partnerships and seeking to further diversify its services offered. "These partnerships include developing alliances to be able to access and execute larger and more complex civil works projects including large span bridges and major highway construction," he reports. "Private sector partnerships closer to BRC's beginnings

in land development are also planned to take advantage of opportunities in land subdivision and agriculture development. At the same time, the expertise BRC has gained in concrete works for road construction has a great potential to be honed to the building construction industry, a pursuit BRC is actively exploring."

To complement its anticipated growth in road construction, as well as new sectors, BRC is planning to relocate its headquarters to a new location at the entrance of Belmopan. Cano says "This will allow space for the new services envisaged and facilitate growth of existing services in an organized and efficient manner while enhancing the visibility of an upcoming leader in the Belize construction sector."

PREFERRED VENDORS

■ Belmopan Aggregates & Hardware www.bahbz.com

Founded in 1990, by Menno, Frank, and Levi Penner, the company began selling sand and gravel for the infrastructural development of Belmopan, Belize and its surroundings. Today, Belmopan Aggregates & Hardware sells building materials, hardware, lawn equipment, motorcycles, and a wide variety of other products such as electronics, appliances, air conditioning, building tools, etc.

■ Excel Construction Ltd. leonard@excelconstruction.bz

Located in Spanish Lookout, Belize, Excel Construction Ltd. is a supplier of concrete and aggregate.



Belmopan Aggregates & Hardware (BAH) is a leading building material and hardware supplier in Belmopan, Belize. We carry a large selection of building materials and hardware items for big and small jobs. At BAH, we understand quality is important when it comes to building or fixing anything. That is why we offer only high-quality products to our customers.

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The

BIG CREEK GROUP



BIG PLANS AND BIG CHALLENGES AHEAD

The Big Creek Group is a group of investors who facilitate and oversee the operation of several companies in the privately-owned community of Big Creek, in the southern part of Belize. The key members of the Group are Michael Duncker, Antonio Zabaneh, and Zaid Flores, all businessmen who are involved in a variety of major industries such as shrimp, bananas, citrus, port facilities, ship agency, and fertilizer importation and distribution.

The six core compa-

AT A GLANCE THE BIG CREEK GROUP

WHAT: Several companies in the Big Creek community

WHERE: Southern Belize

WEBSITE: www.bigcreekgroup.com



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panies that operate out of Big Creek are: the Port of Big Creek – the country’s principal port for exports; Banana Enterprise Limited – providing port, tug and barge, and stevedoring services for the Port; Belagro Agriculture – the largest fertilizer and agro-chemical supplier in Belize; BC Shipping – an international container shipping company; Haney Farm Limited – shrimp farming; and Softech Data Center - an online travel agency.

According to Anuar Flores, brother of Zaid, a former Director of the Central Bank of Belize and currently a Director of Belize Electricity Limited, and, for the past several years, a business consultant to the Group, the history of the Port of Big Creek is intimately tied to the country’s banana industry. “It has been at the center

of the development of the Port and the Big Creek Group,” he explains. “In the early 1980s, the once government-owned and foreign-managed banana industry was on the verge of collapse. The United Kingdom wanted the bananas but the production was too small to justify the efforts; the shipping time was too long and manual loading on barges, transported to Guatemala for transshipment to the UK, was just not cost-effective and created significant quality issues.

“The then Chairman of the Irish-owned Company, Fyffes, Mr. John Ellis, a former Vice Chairman of United Brands Fruit Company, a visionary and strong advocate of the Belize banana industry, with the assistance of Craig Griffith, a retired Investment banker, coordinated with the



Caribbean Development Bank, Barclays Bank International, and Fyffes, and incorporated Banana Enterprises Limited, a change that would, today, see the once fragile industry of 1,200 acres grow to 7,000 acres, with a production of 6,000,000 boxes annually, and the manual operations at a makeshift port, transformed into a full deep water port terminal facility, the Port of Big Creek.

“A majority of the founding shareholders of Banana Enterprises Limited could not see the vision and sold out their positions in the early years. Zaid Flores, an accountant and practicing auditor for Price Waterhouse Coopers, along with Duncker and Zabaneh, saw the vision, grasped it, and made it their own. Mike and



Tony were already shareholders, so Zaid secured a loan through one of the local banks and bought the shares being sold. The Company is now owed by these three in equal proportions.”

Today, the Big Creek Group employs 250 people and is the driving force for economic

activity in southern Belize. There are multiple buildings on the Big Creek property, including offices, employee housing, equipment and maintenance sheds, and inventory warehouses. In addition, the Group has allotted a portion of the land adjacent to the Port for the storage and export of crude oil coming in from the current oil production facility in Spanish Lookout. A tank farm with six tanks, with a capacity of 60,000 barrels, was recently erected. The current footprint of the Port is 75 acres with ample room for expansion since the Group owns 420 acres of surrounding land.

Flores reports that the Group is currently undertaking the development and expansion of

the Port, a BZ\$30M investment. This includes the construction of modern offices, deepening of the entry channel, the construction of a large steel deck barge, the acquisition of an additional tug boat and other miscellaneous heavy duty equipment, and the construction of a third berthing facility. He would like to see other changes, as well, including the construction of grain silos and the establishment of an EPZ (Export Processing Zone) within the Port to attract light manufacturing and other industries. He would also like to establish alliances with strategic carrier partners to improve Port traffic. He hopes that, along with these improvements,



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the Port's current advantages will help it to compete more effectively with the only other major port in the country, 150 miles away in Belize City.

"Currently they have the majority of the containerized business primarily because they are the oldest port in the country and for many years was the only port; vessels had no other choice," Flores says. "But, we are pushing hard for our marketing efforts to generate more of the containerized business for us. The Port of Big Creek offerings are different from the port in the city. We have three alongside berths; therefore, we can accommodate three vessels simultaneously unlike the city port that operates only with a single trestle. We specialize in refrigerated cargo, we have

facilities to accommodate 120 refrigerated containers, our stevedoring services are not unionized, and we have ample space for expansion and growth. Our Port is in a protected quay and has, in place, redundancies in key areas to ensure reliability and efficiency."

Flores outlines some of the Port's future goals and objectives: "We see Belize becoming a primary exporter of agricultural products to the Caribbean and Central America, and the Port becoming a world-class facility," he states. "The Port's mission is to provide a world class import and export alternative, harness its strategic geographic position to maximize cost saving opportunities, and, by extension, stimulate increased economic activity in the south while remaining com-

petitive and secure. Its vision is to become a prominent, multifaceted, comprehensive, sustainable, and innovative port in the region, with a commitment to continue strengthening the national economy, and improving the living and environmental conditions of Belize."

Regarding the Big Creek Group, as a whole, Flores believes that it needs to take active steps to shore up the country's banana industry, which has not grown significantly over the last several years, and especially since Fyffes, which imports much of the country's output, was recently bought out by

Sumitomo Corporation, a major Japanese conglomerate. "Who knows what these new owners will decide to do with Belize's banana industry?" he wonders. "So, major decisions must be made. If we've learned anything from the past, it is that we do not linger at crossroads. We must grab the opportunity while we have the chance. We must put the industry back on the path to growth and convince the new buyers that we are here to stay and our niche in quality and specialized packaging is worth keeping."

Clearly, there are both big plans and big challenges ahead for the Big Creek Group.

PREFERRED VENDORS

■ Sagicor Life www.sagicor.com

Founded in 1840, Sagicor means "wisdom with heart." The name reflects the nature of the financial advice and services it offers. Sagicor now operates in 22 countries in the Caribbean, the USA, and Latin America. It offers a comprehensive range of financial solutions – life, health and general insurance; investments; retirement and estate planning; home ownership; education savings; saving plans; money management; and more.

■ KeyPlex International Inc. www.keyplex.com

KeyPlex serves the agricultural and the mosquito abatement community with highly-effective plant nutritionals and bio-control products. The company was founded in 1980 by Dr. Irwin Morse, a Miami surgeon and cancer researcher, and George Butler, a prominent Homestead nurseryman.

■ Arysta LifeScience www.arystalifescience.com



BASHCO

Trading Company

THE STORE THAT GIVES YOU MORE

AT A GLANCE BASHCO TRADING COMPANY

WHAT: A retail company with 12 outlets

WHERE: Kingston, Jamaica

WEBSITE: www.facebook.com/bashco

Bashco Trading Company, billed as “The Store That Gives You More” was founded about 26 years ago in Kingston, Jamaica, by Gassan Azan, its current Chairman & CEO. “There was a niche market in the wholesale business,” says Elias Azan, Director of Operations and Gassan’s cousin. “Goods were being imported from the Far East and, in the majority of cases were being sold wholesale to vendors in Jamaica.” At that time, Bashco’s travelling salesmen started selling mostly household and haberdashery wholesale goods across the country.

Over the years, demand shifted from wholesale to retail and the company grew and expanded its network of stores. “The business has evolved, now, where it has moved from just one location, to where we now have 12 full-service, retail stores and three warehouses,” says Elias. In addition to its three Kingston locations, there are two Bashco outlets in the island’s second-largest



city, Montego Bay, as well as in Sav-la-Mar, Mandeville, Ocho Rios, May Pen, Santa Cruz, Spanish Town, and Linstead. The company employs over 900 people.

Elias believes that Bashco maintains its market lead as one of Jamaica’s top retailers for household goods, haberdashery, clothing, electronics, appliances, furniture, and more, by constantly upgrading its stores and offering its customers a better shopping experience. “Over the last several years, what we have done is build out new stores, and changed some locations,” he explains. “And, within the last





year or two, we have taken a very aggressive move in the Montego Bay market; we put a brand new store on Barnett St. and recently renovated and upgraded our Church St. location. In Mandeville, we have done major renovations and we have opened up a second floor in the Mandeville store. Within the last six months, we have upgraded our downtown store, called Bashco WOW – it's a kind of commissary/deli, and we're offering pizza and sandwiches and salads. So, it caters to the working environment in downtown Kingston and that has been doing extremely well. In the last two years, across seven of our stores, we have added grocery items, so we are becoming like a one-stop-shop in a lot of our locations."

Omar Azan, Bashco's Marketing and Public Relations Manager, stresses that listening to the public is a key part of its marketing strategy. "We host these customer appreciation and customer interaction events," he says. "We're listening: 'What are you looking for? What do you want?'"

We do that across all of our locations during the course of the year."

Bashco also maintains a very pervasive media presence – on TV, radio, and the internet. "We have a very, very strong television presence, where we have a thirty-minute infomercial – the first one of its kind in Jamaica - where we mix interesting content with entertainment, bringing light to the new products and services available, and some of the new changes and developments at the store level," says Omar.

"In addition, we have a very strong audio presence on the most popular radio station in Jamaica," he continues. "In Jamaica, radio advertising is still very strong, because we have an active music scene. So, our radio advertising has a lot of musical influence. The dance hall genre is very popular and Bashco has aligned itself with that culture point, so most of our radio and television advertising appeals to that market because it also turns out to be our target niche, as well. Additionally, we do a lot of social media marketing; our social media presence is very active and





very engaged.”

Omar has some ambitious, long-term plans for the company, as well. “One is developing a strong e-commerce platform for Bashco,” he reveals. “We carry in excess of a hundred thousand SKUs (Stock Keeping Units) – the different items in our stores. So, to go towards an e-commerce market, to list all of those items, is a daunting challenge, but something I’m working towards. My concept is, within five to ten years, to reach out to the current Diaspora who have ties

to Jamaica to try and get them interested, and then take it a step further and actually have a strong online retail presence across Jamaica.”

“Concurrent with that, from an operational perspective, is going to come, out of necessity, upgrades of our point-of-sales systems and the centralization of our distribution, warehousing, and so on – a general upgrade and improvement in those areas,” Elias says. “And if opportunities present themselves in terms of location, where we can have an addition to our stores, and the location is right, we will certainly jump at that with both hands,” he adds.

Meanwhile, “The Store That Gives You More” will continue to provide its customers the best options in offerings, quality, and price. “We are



in it for the long haul, and we are constantly looking for ways to re-engineer, re-tool, re-develop, and re-design, so that we become better at what we do,” Elias declares. “If you ask people about our company in Jamaica, they will say that we are always in the spotlight in terms of

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what we are doing and the things that we are achieving. We have done a lot to change the retail landscape in Jamaica, and the way we are positioning ourselves, in another five to ten years, we certainly are going to be one of those cutting-edge companies going forward.”

“Staying connected to the people we have been serving has fueled the changes and the development,” adds Omar. “That will be our continued focus, going forward – staying connected and listening, and redefining ourselves to fit the market that we’re in.”



PREFERRED VENDORS

■ BDO

www.bdo.com.jm

Founded in 1993, BDO in Jamaica is a member of one of the world’s largest and foremost providers of assurance, auditing, accounting, taxation, financial management, and business advisory services. It serves clients in a broad range of public and private sectors.

■ Sign Craft Ltd.

www.signcraftja.com

Established in 1968 by Roy Mac-Dougal, Sign Craft Ltd. has been a leader in the sign industry in Jamaica for over 40 years. Known for its high level of quality, the company currently produces interior signage, door plates, plaques, and badges for many local and International companies.

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Southern Electrical Company Ltd. leads the charge as the largest electrical and lighting supplier in Grenada. Its impressive retail store features a modern electrical hardware environment offering a wide variety of quality electrical items for residential, commercial, and industrial applications, along with “the most versatile and wonderful lighting showroom” in Grenada.

Managing Director, Lera Gooding, shares the company’s proud backstory. “Southern Electrical Company is a family-owned-and-operated business founded in 1996 by Emmanuel Duncan, Sr., himself a qualified electrician. At that time, he worked with a foreign electrical manufacturer here in Grenada. When that company closed their operation, Mr. Duncan saw the void in the





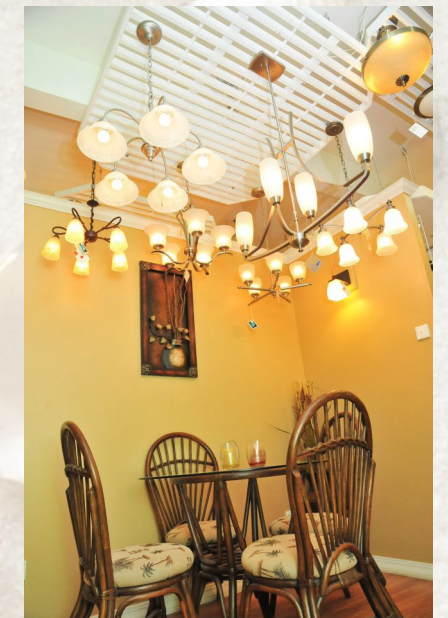
local market and made the decision to optimize on a new approach. Together with his two sons and a former staff member, he established Southern Electrical.”

From conception, the mindset was to create a Grenadian company for the Grenadian people; a company that delivered the highest quality service and products; the kind of products Mr. Duncan, himself, would like to buy. As a renowned electrician in the region, he realized the niche was in providing professional and specialized services to the customers he served, and liaising with suppliers to provide products fitting the customers’ specifications, as well as industry standards.

Gooding adds, “Basically, that is the genesis

of our company. Today, we continue to provide our customers these services to an even greater extent. The evolution since then has given rise to partnership with other stakeholders and policy makers to reduce energy costs. And that is what drives Southern Electrical today.”

At Southern Electrical where customers always come first, savvy business sense, knowledge of the industry and keen interest in technological advancements are proving invaluable for the continued success and



growth of the family business.

Gooding explains the intricacies of product sourcing: “Going through the Caribbean, we have 220 volts in some places, following the British standard, and 110 volts in places like Trinidad, where they’re following U.S. standards. Grenada is a 220-volts market, so a large quantity of our products come from England – all the switching, the accessories, things like that. We do bring some product out of the U.S., some out of China, countries like Puerto Rico, and the other CARICOM members like Trinidad.”

Southern Electrical Company’s retail location is a popular destination for homeowners and contractors, alike. The Lighting Showroom on the second floor features contemporary lighting fixtures, ceiling fans, and innovative lighting solutions for kitchen, living room, bedroom, bathroom, outdoor, and





AT A GLANCE SOUTHERN ELECTRICAL COMPANY LTD.

WHAT: Leading electrical and lighting supplier in Grenada

WHERE: Grand Anse, St. George's, Granada

WEBSITE: www.segrenada.com

garden illumination. Supported by all the major lighting manufacturers, such as Elgo, Kichler, Progress Lighting, and Seagull Lighting, Southern Electrical supplies the most sought-after product available today.

The ground floor of the store focuses on hardware necessary for electrical installations in residential, industrial, and commercial applications. Electrical wiring accessories (switches, sockets, distribution panels and breakers, isolators, transformers, etc.), tools, small electrical appliances, and a nut and bolt center are all available, along

with a friendly, knowledgeable staff ready to impart expert advice.

“We currently employ 20 full-time persons, with an occasional need for four to five persons, part-time,” says Gooding. “We have just one retail location in the capital city; however, we do provide services and products to our neighboring islands of Carriacou and Petit Martinique. Our team visits the clients there; we communicate by cellular phone; we transport goods by a local ferry. So, we do have that connection outside mainland Grenada.”

Southern Electrical also has a wholesale division as a separate arm of the business, where project-size sales are handled. “For example,” says Gooding, “if there is a new development going on – a new hotel, or apartment building, or school – we provide specialized service to the contractor and the developer. Not only from a retail front, but more from a technical, wholesale, direct-to-the-contractor type of sales and service, Southern Electrical basically project manages the supply of materials to the customer, supports him in the technical aspects of the documentation,

the drawings, materials specified in the orders; that’s our project side. Then we have the wholesale side, where Southern Electrical simply sells products at trade prices to other retailers. And that’s reciprocal, as well.”

Three important factors differentiate Southern Electrical from competitors:

Customer service; expert advice. “Part of our branding is ‘Best Value,’ ‘Quality Products,’ and the last part of that is ‘Expert Advice.’ We always talk about the product, the uses of the product, with the customer. So, even if he already has a certain



item, we direct him to features that provide a better solution. We're focused on selling the customer what they want, as opposed to somebody walking in the door and merely picking up something."

First to market; being on the cutting edge of technology. "It's important to keep up with what's new. Energy savings, energy-efficient products, developing our own brand with factories and printing companies overseas. We have a branded product on the shelves that belongs to us."

Positioning the brand and the company in the market, in such a way that the contractor doesn't feel threatened that Southern Electrical

is competing with him on a project.

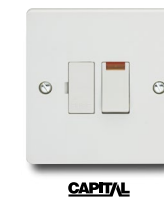
Gooding acknowledges, "We're an electrical and lighting hardware company. Two other competitors on the island just specialize in electrical, but they are also contractors. When you have a small island like Grenada - 100,000 people - there may be 55 contractors. One of the ways we separate ourselves is that we have never gone into the contracting business. This was part of Mr. Duncan's vision for Southern Electrical: The contractors never have to be concerned about purchasing goods from a company that may be competing for a contract or job. So, he stayed out of the contracting business and just became a supplier. It's separating



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ourselves by not being competitive to our main customer – which is the contractor."

Southern Electrical is avidly exploring new product technologies to improve energy efficiency, as well as complementary services for existing products. They believe this is critical to maximize return and enhance their service to customers. Other initiatives include expanding on their non-compete relationship with contractors; cooperative agreements with suppliers; extending their geographic market; and honing prices and strategies.

Gooding adds, "Some of our shorter-term expansions would be setting up showrooms in homes, specifically for targeted clients. When it comes to lighting, helping clients see how the products would fit into the different projects. Planning for the longer term is on the plate for



discussion this year with our Executive team and the Board.” (Southern Electrical is a privately held company with a Board of Directors.)

“Freight and related costs is a key issue for our company, especially in a small, competitive market,” she continues. “Going forward, we will work on strategies and forge partnerships that will help to lower cost and make the goods more affordable to our customers. Another point is the government’s ability with the utilities to get on the solar alternative energy bandwagon – which we can also benefit from as suppliers and with social responsibility in terms

of providing alternative energy types of products.”

The customer base for Southern Electrical is the corporate section of Grenada, hotels, the university, contractors, and homeowners. “The dynamism of our brand speaks for itself: ‘Best Value, Quality Products, Expert Advice.’ We’ve been around for 20 years, we’re not a fly-by-night. Our products have gone through the ringer, so we recognize what’s good or not, we know what makes sense, and what’s applicable to our market, which is quite unique.”

Then, there’s the expert advice. “You may come to the store with a request, but you just don’t know

what you’re looking for. This is not a D-I-Y, where you come in and if it’s not on the shelf, too bad. This is a place where we have the technical knowledge and flexibility to get you what you need, and you walk out the door a happy customer.

“We are always sitting on the technological edge. Given today’s global interest in climate stabilization, we’re focused on energy-efficient products. That’s one of the pin-points of sourcing for us; what’s hottest in solar capability that’s available for us at 12 degrees north of the equator – we’re in a perfect position for it.”

PREFERRED VENDOR

■ **Electrium**
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RESIN CONVERTERS LIMITED

NEW AGENDA, NEW MOTIVATION



Resin Converters Limited is a Trinidad-based company that is a world-class manufacturer of plastic packaging products for the chemical, food, personal care, and pharmaceutical industries. Founded in 2000 by Chris Quesnel, the company specializes in blow molded plastic bottles, stretch blow molded PET (Polyethylene terephthalate) bottles, injection molded plastic caps, and printed and

unprinted film packaging. It is also the largest contract manufacturer of HDPE (high-density polyethylene) plastic bottles in Trinidad.

Business View Magazine first spoke with Quesnel in 2015, and recently caught up with him to see how his business has been faring since then. “With oil prices going down, things have shrunk a bit and we’ve had to look at



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our core products and services,” he begins. “That has been a challenge, but no more than what we are capable of. We’ve lost a couple of big customers, such as Shell and Total, who closed up shop here in the country – they had a global restructuring which caused some changes to our local market. Not losing a beat, we went looking for new clients and we continue to maintain some old, traditional ones.” One such client is the National Petroleum Company which Quesnel says is likely to claim a greater portion of the oil market in Trinidad and the CARICOM region as a whole, now that Shell and Total have left. Resin Converters is on the verge of launching a new container shape for National Petroleum and says that “they’re very excited about it.”

Quesnel also reports that his company has made the decision to further penetrate the food market, and that it is also looking at putting product in bottles for the export market. “One of the things that has hit Trinidad business very hard is the availability of foreign exchange,” he says, explaining the company’s desire to push exports. “We have failed to keep the value of our currency on a floating system – it doesn’t slide as the world’s currencies

AT A GLANCE RESIN CONVERTERS LIMITED

WHAT: A world-class manufacturer of plastic packaging products

WHERE: Caroni, Trinidad

WEBSITE: www.resinconverterstt.com

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CHRIS QUESNEL,
FOUNDER

do. So, what happens is that you get a very cautious business sector that realizes that you can lose very big if there's a re-adjustment of the exchange rate. So, the larger, cash-rich companies buy up all the foreign exchange that they can, creating a shortage.

"This has happened over the last year and it has created great difficulty sourcing raw materials and being able to pay for them. Hence, most of us who have been through a few recessions look towards positioning ourselves for exports and this is what the next move of this company will be. And in our drive to package products for export, we are already on the way." Quesnel says that for the last year and a half, he has been attempting to overcome various trade barriers in several Latin American countries, but hopes to enter those new markets within the next few months. "It may mean very small margins, but once you have the foreign exchange, you can ensure payment for your raw materials," he says.

Quesnel also reveals that over the last year or so, Resin Converters has embarked upon an extensive management training regimen for its supervisory per-



sonnel. "I think it was a very good opportunity to dig deep into this idea with my management team," he states. "It was quite rewarding in the sense of bringing out the best in my team and re-emphasizing our goals and our vision coming out of a recessionary period. I have a management team that took the training well and I think they will be well-conditioned to handle the change of direction of the company. I stand behind my team – it's not a one-man show. I really believe that with teamwork, we can do anything."

Finally, Quesnel says that he is continuing his long-term goal of trying to get the government of Trinidad to move forward on implementing a reasonable, plastic recycling program. Even

though it is a small country, between 50 and 60 million plastic bottles are disposed of into its waste stream, every month. "I do some recycling on post-industrial, but I have not been able to go to post-consumer, yet. And we can't get the government to get serious about separating recyclables from waste," he laments. "But we're going to keep fighting. It's been 17 years I've been working on it and if I have to work another 17, I will. I don't give up easy."

Meanwhile, Quesnel believes that with its new agenda and its reinvigorated management team, Resin Converters will continue to rebound from the darker days of the Great Recession. "I do feel, very strongly, that a recession is a time when you don't curl up and lay low. It's a time for you to dig in, explore new opportunities, and bring the company to better profitability," he declares. "And if we continue to do what we're doing, we should see a very good return on investment."



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